

# U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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January 16, 2021

Dear Marylanders,

Each year on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we celebrate the life and legacy of the civil rights icon who changed our nation. The fight he led for justice and social equality for Black Americans made our nation a more equal place for all and his legacy laid the blueprint for generations to continue organizing for social change. While it's important to use this day to say, "look at how far we've come," we must reckon with the ways our society is still fractured with the same wounds Dr. King marched to heal.

Dr. King's movement did not end with his death, and neither did the hate or division that he fought against. The reason his words and his message carry such a weight today is because we're still working to right our nation's wrongs and to undo the threads of systemic racism. Today's world carries vestiges of Dr. King's activism and the forces he marched, organized, and led a movement against, and we can't ignore them.

We have watched for years as [Donald Trump tapped into a well of hate, bigotry and racism](#) flowing underground and drew them to the surface. In doing so, he has created a safe place for individuals to spew hate without retribution. He said there were "[very fine people, on both sides](#)" in Charlottesville, where white supremacists countered peaceful protesters with anti-Semitic and racist aggression. There is a clear thread between this event and the insurrection at the Capitol just 10 days ago, where the rioters kicked down the doors of our Capitol wearing racist and anti-Semitic symbols and waving confederate and Trump flags.

The [contrast in law enforcement's response](#) to this attack versus the Black Lives Matter protests last summer are a clear reminder of the divisions in our society - the two worlds that exist and the double standards by which they are policed. Last year we witnessed live on television as the National Guard force back peaceful protesters to make way for [Trump's photo op](#), while insurgents invaded the Capitol without apparent consequence. Dr. King ushered in change during one of the country's most tumultuous and violent periods of our nation's history - and peaceful, non-violent protests were crucial to that mission. He said himself, "Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon, which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals." In the year 2020, those using his tools met the same language and actions of violence that his movement met decades earlier.

Honoring Dr. King's legacy means taking a close look at where we are in the present. It is our duty to continue his work and use the wisdom and the tools he left us to solidify a lasting change. We must always continue to bend the moral arc toward justice.

In the protests for racial justice, the mobilization of [record-numbers of voters](#), and the work of community leaders and medical workers nationwide to combat COVID-19, we saw the people come together in the face of inequities in our criminal justice, economic, and healthcare systems. We saw the people come together to serve their communities and challenge systemic racism in our nation - this is a part of his legacy as well.

We now have an opportunity to take meaningful action in government to match these goals with legislation. In just a few days, we will swear in new leadership, President Joe Biden, and our nation's first Black woman Vice President, Kamala Harris. They bring with them a [diverse cabinet](#) selected for their expertise and their dedication to restoring the integrity of our democracy and righting the wrongs of the Trump administration. This historic win will not fix society overnight, but it gives hope that we can keep moving our country progressively forward. We are entering a time of collective empowerment in which we can work at all levels to achieve all of Dr. King's goals - to bring social, economic, and legal equality to all Americans, and to cast out the shadows of hate that have stretched across our nation with light and love.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day should be a day of action and reflection. We must recommit ourselves and our country to progress and healing. We must carry on the torch for Dr. King's ideals and ensure that equality, justice and respect for all people are fixtures in our society that will stand firm as long as we all hold them up together.

Thank you. Please stay safe.



Ben Cardin